

Alternate Menu Planning Approaches

On May 9, 2000, the USDA published the final rule on “Any Reasonable Approach” under the title of *National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program: Additional Menu Planning Approaches*.

The final regulation mirrors the proposed rule with a few minor modifications. Key provisions include:

- Incorporating the traditional food based menu-planning (TFBMP) approach as a permanent menu-planning option.
- Adopting the proposed minimum requirements for nutrient levels under TFBMP.
- Permitting alternate menu-planning approaches that include two distinct classes: (1) min or modifications to established menu-planning approaches; (2) major or unique proposals that depart “significantly” from existing approaches.

The minor class involves three possible modifications to the Food Based Menu Planning (FBMP) options for lunch only. Local Education Agencies (LEAs) can make one or more of these modifications to their existing FBMP approach without being subject to state or federal pre-approval.

The three modifications are:

1. Majority of Children (One age/grade group outside)*
Schools Using FBMP, either traditional or enhanced, may use the age/grade grouping (with its corresponding portion size requirements) for the majority of the children as long as only one age or grade is outside the established level.
2. Age/Grade Group (Nutrient levels K-6, 7-12)*
Schools using traditional FBMP can adopt the nutrient standards developed for the other menu planning approaches.

For Grades	Portion Sizes Used	Nutrient Standards
K – 6	Portion sizes for Traditional FBMP grades 4 – 12	Use Nutrient Standards for grades K – 6 from the other menu planning approaches (NSMP/ANSMP, enhanced FBMP)
7 – 12	Portion sizes for Traditional FBMP grades 4 – 12	Use Nutrient Standards for grades 7 – 12 from the other menu planning approaches (NSMP/ANSMP, enhanced FBMP)

3. Meat/Meat Alternate (Meat/Meat Alternate Modification)*
Required minimum quantities of meat/meat alternate component may be offered as a weekly total with a one-ounce (or its equivalent for certain meat alternates) minimum daily serving size. Counting total weekly contributions of meat/meat alternate is not extended to school breakfast menus.

The second class involves major modifications to one of the four existing menu-planning approaches or development of an entirely new menu-planning approach.

Any major changes or alternate menu approaches developed by the LEA would be subject to the review and approval of the State agency. LEAs are required to submit a written plan to the State agency as a basis for review.

All alternate menu-planning approaches in this second class must:

- Offer fluid milk;
- Meet the Recommended Dietary Allowances and lunch-time energy allowances (nutrient levels) and indicate the age/grade groups served and how the nutrient levels are met for those age/grade groups;
- Include the *offer versus serve* provision for senior high students. Alternate menu-planning approaches choosing not to follow established offer versus serve procedures must indicate: (A) The affected age/grade groups; (B) The number and type of items that constitute a reimbursable lunch under *offer versus serve*; (C) How such procedures will reduce plate waste; and (D) How a reasonable level of calories and nutrients for the lunch as taken is provided;
- Follow competitive food requirements;
- Identify a reimbursable lunch or breakfast at the point of service;
- Explain how the alternate approach can be monitored;
- Follow the requirement for weighted analysis and for approved software for nutrient standard menu-planning approaches.

* The wording in parenthesis identifies the modification on the Menu-Planning Section – Part 7 of the Web Application Agreement.